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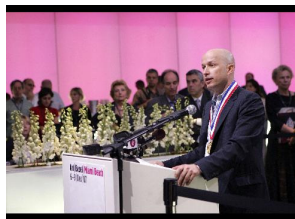
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## news

Art Basel Miami, 40,000 Shoppers Strong, Tests Limits of Market

By Lindsay Pollock

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Dec. 5 (Bloomberg) -- As the wind rustled through Miami's trademark palm trees last night and deejay Hottpants played underground '80s tunes, Martin Eisenberg focused on buying a painting by hotshot 25-year-old artist [Jeni Spota](#).

Eisenberg, vice president of retailer Bed, Bath & Beyond Inc., made his acquisition from the Sister gallery of Los Angeles during the opening hours of the annual [New](#) More News

[Art Dealers Alliance](#) fair in Miami, where collectors paced the aisles snapping up the young and hot, mostly for a few thousand bucks.

"We've been here I don't know how long," said New York collector Marsha Gustave, husband and art adviser in tow. "We've bought five things. I don't know if we'll be able to fly back. We'll have to hitch."

About 40,000 art shoppers are descending on a South Florida convention hall this week for the sixth annual [Art Basel Miami Beach](#) art fair. The extravaganza starts today with staggered entry times for card-carrying VIPs. It's open to the public on Dec. 6-9.

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### Year-End Sales

"There is plenty of confidence in the market," said [Andrew Fabricant](#), director of New York's Richard Gray Gallery, which is showing works in Miami by [Willem de Kooning](#), among others. "It's an opportunity for dealers to have last-gasp sales before the end of the year."

The 200 U.S. and international galleries at the main Miami Beach fair spent about \$100,000 apiece for booth rental and other expenses. Works by 2,000 artists -- big names such as [Damien Hirst](#) and [Louise Bourgeois](#), as well as newer talents like video artist Nathalie Djurberg -- will be for sale. Most of the art is priced under \$500,000, though there are a few multimillion-dollar pieces.

For dealers, the fair is a necessary part of the selling season.

"The art fairs, and especially Art Basel, are attended by serious, busy collectors who don't have time to go to the galleries," New York dealer Michael Rosenfeld said. His booth will feature a 1937 Jacob Lawrence gouache, "Christmas Dinner," for \$225,000 as well as [Joan Mitchell](#)'s abstract 1987 "Chord VI" for \$4 million.



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### Swiss Original

Art Basel Miami Beach will offer hundreds of millions of dollars worth of artworks, dealers estimate. The fair is an offshoot of Swiss-based Art Basel, a stodgier and pricier affair held each June.

The Miami Beach edition, founded in 2002, is the younger and sexier sibling. It features an architect-designed skateboarding half-pipe near the beach and a free concert by aging punk rocker [Iggy Pop](#).

In addition to the sprawling main fair, more than 20 smaller venues have sprung up. These offer art of every flavor, ranging from paintings by artists with newly minted MFA degrees to photography and limited-edition furniture, all jammed into motels, warehouses and tents around town.

### Sequin-and-Feather Dresses

The extravaganza began last night with a party at the Delano hotel. The Argentine-themed soiree featured girls in black-sequin-and-feather dresses and champagne served in plastic glasses around the pool.

Back at the edgy NADA fair, New York collector [Beth Rudin de Woody](#) bought so many pieces that she couldn't recall the names of the artists.

“You see the good, the bad and the in-between” said New York art adviser [Ana Sokoloff](#), decked out in long white leather boots.

Some say it's too much.

“I think they are potentially going to kill the golden goose,” Miami-based art adviser [Lisa Austin](#) said. “It's fatiguing to look at that much art.”

On top of all the fairs, there are dozens of events, ranging from New York collectors Arthur and Connie Zeckendorf's dinner feting Bellwether Gallery artists to Sotheby's reception hyping a French sculptor. UBS, the fair's main sponsor, hosts tented buffet dinners on the beach. There's plenty to do, without the art.

“The fair is threatened to be overshadowed by all the social nonsense,” Fabricant said.

### Snapshot of the World

Still, it continues to provide a snapshot of contemporary art worldwide, with galleries hailing from Manhattan to Moscow to Shanghai.

At the top end, the Acquavella Gallery will be packed with Picassos and Warhols, including a red 1973 Warhol “Mao,” priced above \$10 million. At Zach Feuer's booth, focusing on three younger artists, prices start at \$3,000.

Though young, hip and bearded, Feuer is already a bit weary of the fairs and the socializing.

“I don't get excited anymore about art fairs,” he said. “I don't go out late nights.”

Artist Matthew Day Jackson, 33, does. He stood in the center of his installation last night at NADA, swigging Grolsch beer, surrounded by a blowup of a yellow [Albert Bierstadt](#) landscape painting. His work, which included references to Buckminster Fuller and the Jonestown Massacre, was exhibited by a nonprofit gallery in Texas called Ballroom Marfa.

Jackson, sporting a tattoo of a turkey vulture on his forearm, stood in the sweltering room as ladies with designer handbags and men in Italian shoes swept past.

“Without the patrons,” Jackson said, sipping his beer and shrugging, “most of these things wouldn't be seen.”


([Lindsay Pollock](#) writes on the art market for Bloomberg News. The opinions expressed are her own.)

To contact the writers of this story: Lindsay Pollock in Miami at [lindsaypollock@yahoo.com](mailto:lindsaypollock@yahoo.com).

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